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THE CRIMSON SEA



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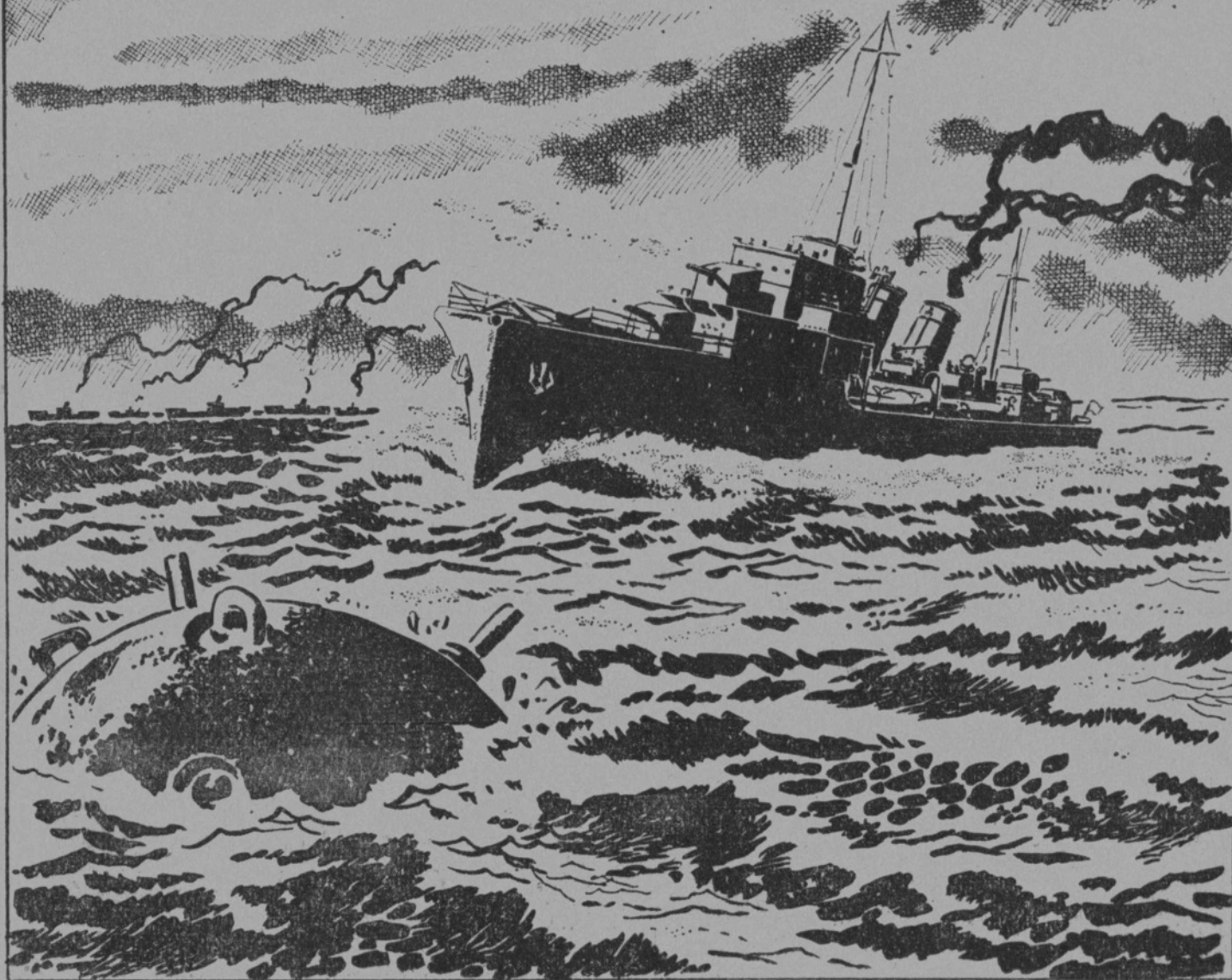
LION

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FIVE STAR WEEKLY

The **Crimson Sea**

IN THE GREY WINTER OF 1942, BATTLE-SCARRED CONVOYS OF SHIPS CLAWED THEIR WAY ACROSS THE ATLANTIC OCEAN WITH LEAN, SALT-GRIMED DESTROYERS CIRCLING PROTECTIVELY. BUT AGAINST THE DEVILISH CONTACT MINES THAT WERE STREWN IN THE CONVOY ROUTES THERE WAS LITTLE DEFENCE.



Chapter 1. PANIC

H.M.S. GRAPNEL, A G-CLASS DESTROYER OF 1,750 TONS, HAD BEEN AT SEA FOR TWENTY-SEVEN DAYS, WITH NO MORE THAN A FEW HOURS AT LONDONDERRY FOR RE-FUELLING. ON THE PORT WING OF THE BRIDGE, ABLE-SEAMAN HEWITT WAS ALLOWING HIMSELF PLEASANT THOUGHTS OF LEAVE, WHEN HE SAW THE MINE....

MINE! BEARING RED-O-ZERO-ONE! DISTANCE TWENTY YARDS!



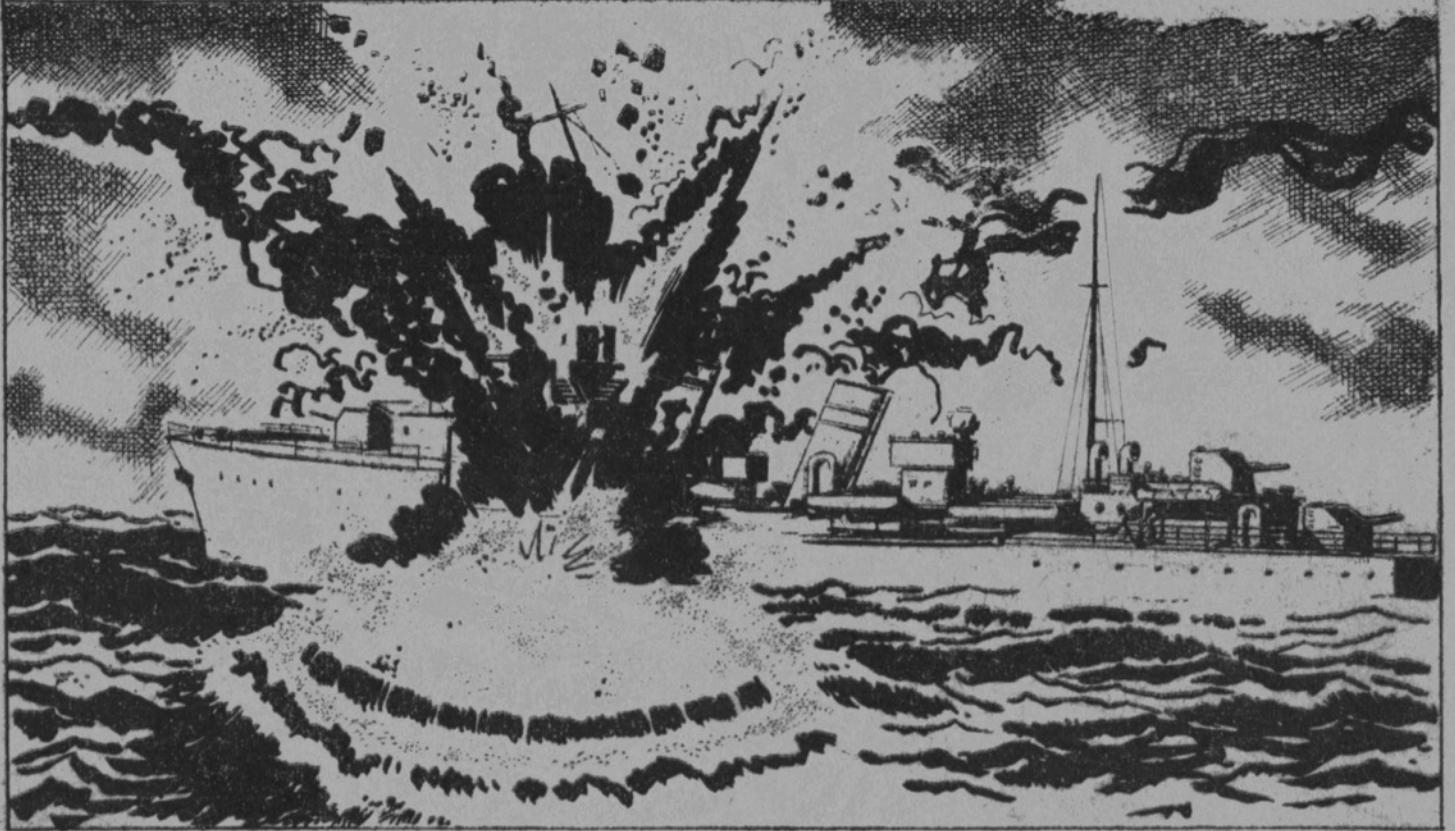
LIEUTENANT WAYMAN, THE OFFICER OF THE WATCH THUMBED HARD DOWN ON THE ALARM SIGNAL, AS HIS SKIPPER, CAPTAIN TREVOR JARDINE, R.N., ISSUED QUIET BUT RAPID ORDERS.

STOP STARBOARD, EMERGENCY FULL AHEAD PORT! HARD-A-STARBOARD WITH THE WHEEL, COX'N!

THE MINE'S RIGHT UNDER OUR PORT BOW, SIR!



UNDER THE COMBINED EFFECT OF ENGINES AND RUDDER, THE GRAPNEL HEELED OVER AND SLEWED SIDWAYS! BUT IT WAS TOO LATE TO ESCAPE THE HORNED MESSENGER OF DEATH!



PARALYSED, THE DESTROYER STOPPED DEAD IN HER TRACKS...



The Crimson Sea

AS CHIEF PETTY OFFICER MCKAY MADE HIS REPORT TO THE BRIDGE, THE FIRE IN THE GALLEY FLAT GAINED HOLD AND BURST THROUGH THE BULKHEAD NEXT TO THE MAGAZINE BELOW 'A' GUN TURRET....

FULL ASTERN BOTH! WHEEL AMIDSHIPS! I INTEND TO STEAM AS FAR FROM THE CONVOY AS I CAN, COX'N — THERE'S A FIRE FORWARD AND WE WILL BE A SIGNAL BEACON FOR EVERY U-BOAT FOR MILES!



DOWN BELOW IN THE W/T OFFICE, ORDINARY TELEGRAPHIST PETER WAYMAN, YOUNGER BROTHER OF THE OFFICER ON THE BRIDGE, HAD BEEN ALONE ON WATCH WHEN THE GRAPNEL HIT THE MINE. WHITE-FACED, TREMBLING, HE LOOKED AT JACK MORNEY, THE LEADING HAND OF THE WATCH...

WHAT—WHAT'S HAPPENED, HOOKEY? HAVE WE BEEN TORPEDOED? ARE — ARE WE SINKING?



TAKE IT EASY, PETE! THE SKIPPER WILL SOON LET US KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING! YOU SIT TIGHT IN CASE THERE'S SIGNALS TO SEND. I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE!

LESS THAN FIVE MINUTES FROM THE SCENE OF THE GRAPNEL'S AGONY, THE PERISCOPE OF A SUBMARINE FEATHERED THE SURFACE, ITS CYCLOPS' EYE TURNING SLOWLY...



SHIP ON FIRE
ON HORIZON. WE'LL
TAKE A CLOSER LOOK!
BLOW TANKS TWO AND
FOUR AND TRIM TO
THIRTY FEET. STAND BY
FOR TORPEDO
ATTACK!

THE U-BOAT CLOSED THE MORTALLY
WOUNDED GRAPNEL...

IT IS A CONVOY ESCORT!
WE WILL FINISH HER OFF AND
THEN RAID THE CONVOY—IT
CAN'T BE FAR!



TUBES ONE AND
TWO READY FOR FIRING!
FOUR OTHER U-BOATS HAVE
BEEN RADIOED AND ARE
CLOSING IN. HERR
KAPITAN!

WITH THE FIRE RAGING FORWARD, HER
ASDIC GEAR SMASHED, THE GRAPNEL
RECEIVED NO WARNING OF THE NAZI
KILLER SO CLOSE BENEATH THE WAVES.



CAN'T YOU GET
THAT FIRE OUT,
WAYMAN?

THE DAMAGE
CONTROL PARTY ARE
MAKING SOME HEADWAY,
SIR, BUT THE ENGINE-ROOM
SAY THEY CAN'T HOLD
OUT MUCH LONGER!

The Crimson Sea

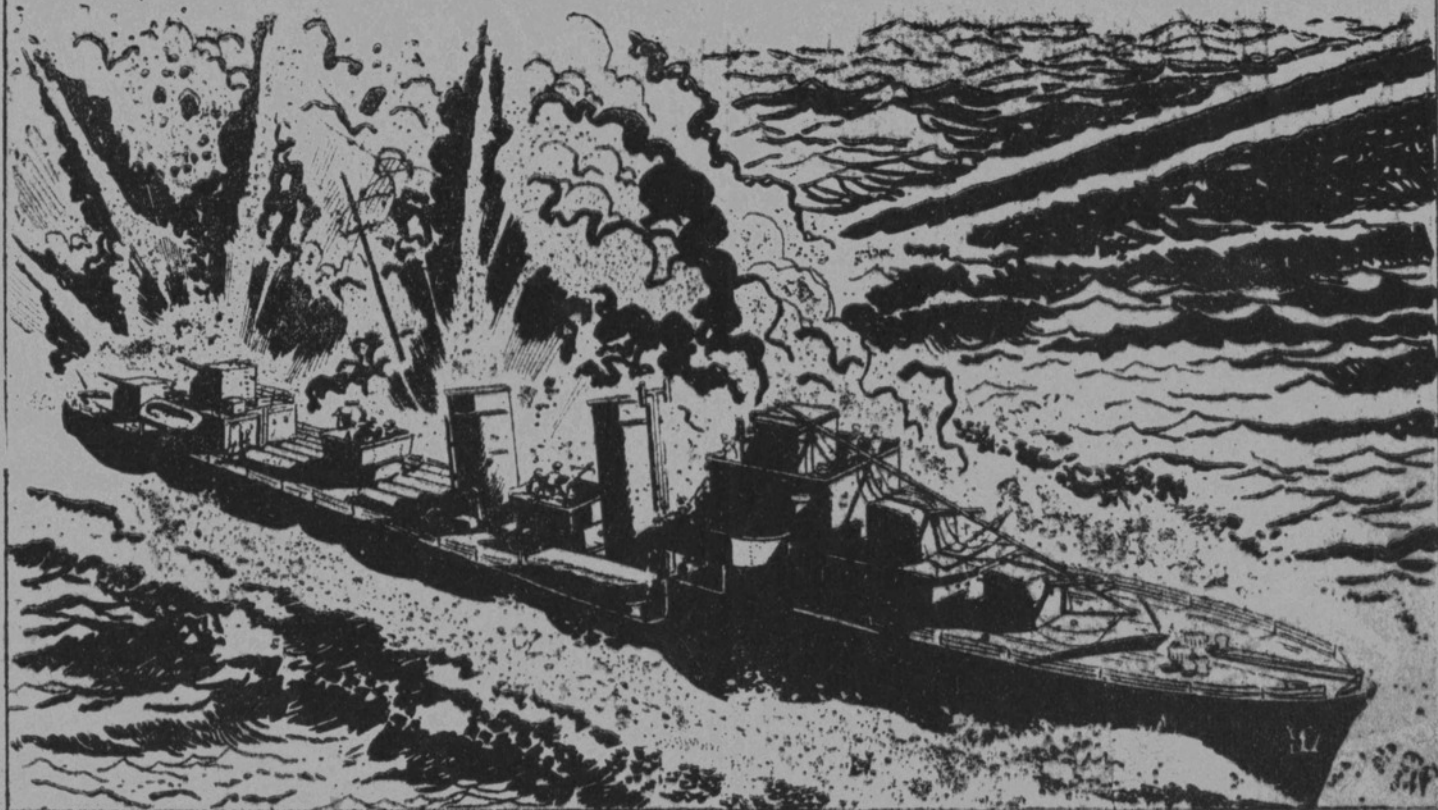
THE DAMAGE CONTROL PARTY SWEATED AT THEIR TASK, THEIR FACES GLISTENING IN THE MACABRE LIGHT OF THE FIRE....



THE DESTROYER WAS NOW ON BORROWED TIME — DEATH WAS FIFTEEN SECONDS AWAY....



THE FIFTEEN SECONDS HAD PASSED! WITH A SHATTERING ROAR A TORPEDO RIPPED INTO THE STERN OF THE GRAPNEL...



THE DECK TILTED CRAZILY, AND THE HEAVY ATLANTIC SWELL FLOODED OVER THE GUARD RAILS. IN THE W/T OFFICE, PETER WAYMAN RIPPED OFF HIS HEADPHONES....



CHIEF! MORNEY'S D-DEAD! HE'S ON THE DECK IN HERE!

STAY WHERE YOU ARE, SON! YOU'LL GET YOUR ORDERS FROM THE BRIDGE! THERE'LL BE SIGNALS TO SEND!

ALL LIGHTS IN THE GRAPNEL SUDDENLY WENT OUT, AND ONLY THE GLARE FROM THE DEVOURING FLAMES REVEALED THE DEATH THROES OF THE DESTROYER.



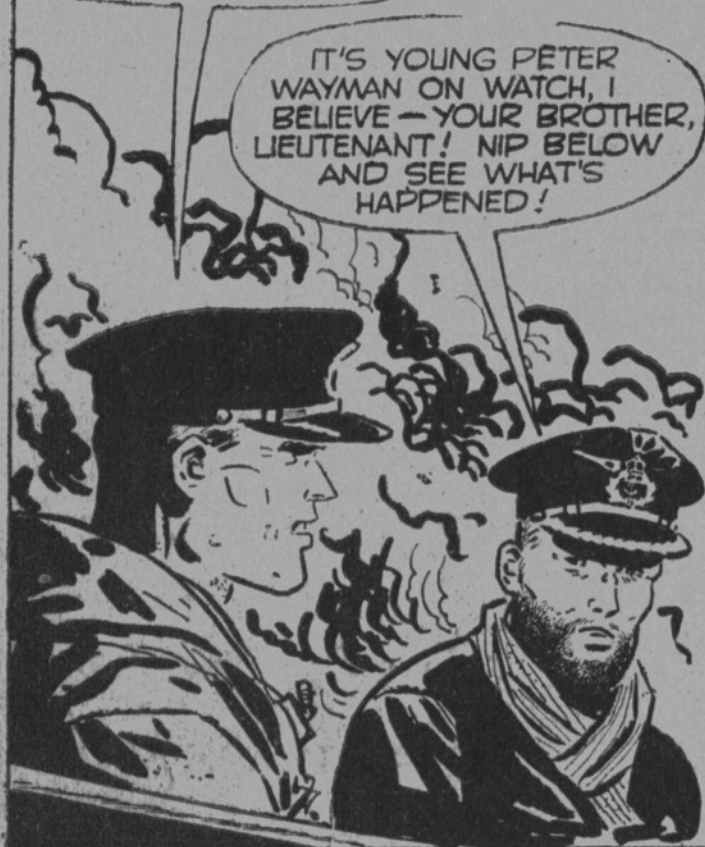
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, SIR?

I-- I CAN MANAGE, THANKS! PASS A MESSAGE TO THE W/T OFFICE. GIVE THE OPERATOR ON WATCH OUR POSITION! TELL HIM TO BREAK RADIO SILENCE AND REQUEST ASSISTANCE!

The Crimson Sea

NO REPLY FROM
THE W/T OFFICE, SIR.

IT'S YOUNG PETER
WAYMAN ON WATCH, I
BELIEVE — YOUR BROTHER,
LIEUTENANT! NIP BELOW
AND SEE WHAT'S
HAPPENED!



AS LIEUTENANT WAYMAN CLATTERED
AWAY, TREVOR JARDINE ADDRESSED
THOSE OF HIS MEN WHO COULD STILL
HEAR HIM....

THIS IS THE
CAPTAIN! CLEAR LOWER
DECK IMMEDIATELY!
BREAK OUT THE CARLEY
RAFTS AND SEE THAT
YOUR LIFE-BELTS ARE
INFLATED! STAND BY
TO ABANDON
SHIP!



DOWN BELOW, LIEUTENANT WAYMAN STAGGERED
ALONG THE HEAVILY LISTING DECK TO THE W/T
OFFICE....

PETER!
HAVE YOU SENT
OUT OUR
POSITION?



THERE — THERE'S
NOT TIME! WE'RE SINKING!
DON'T STAY DOWN HERE, DAVE —
YOU'LL BE TRAPPED!

LIEUTENANT WAYMAN SCRAMBLED TO THE LADDER AND GRABBED AT HIS BROTHER AS PETER CLIMBED UPWARDS....



BUT YOUNG PETER WAYMAN, FACING HIS FIRST TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE OF ACTION AT SEA, WAS BEYOND THE REACH OF REASONING!



THE GRAPNEL LURCHED SUDDENLY AND
LIEUTENANT WAYMAN, HIS EYES BLEAK,
TURNED BACK TO THE W/T OFFICE....

MY MORSE ISN'T
ALL THAT GOOD—I ONLY
HOPE THEY CAN READ IT
AT THE OTHER END!



AGAIN THE DESTROYER SHUDDERED
FROM STEM TO STERN AND HER BOWS
SETTLED MORE DEEPLY IN THE WATER.

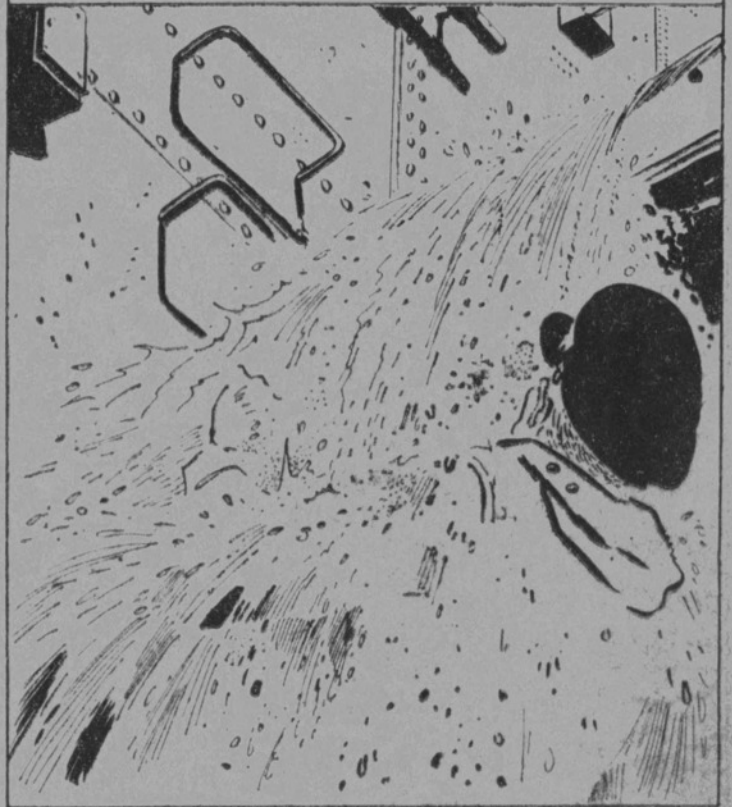
ABANDON SHIP!
SWIM AWAY FROM
GRAPNEL BUT STAY
TOGETHER IN THE WATER—
AND GOOD LUCK,
ALL OF YOU!



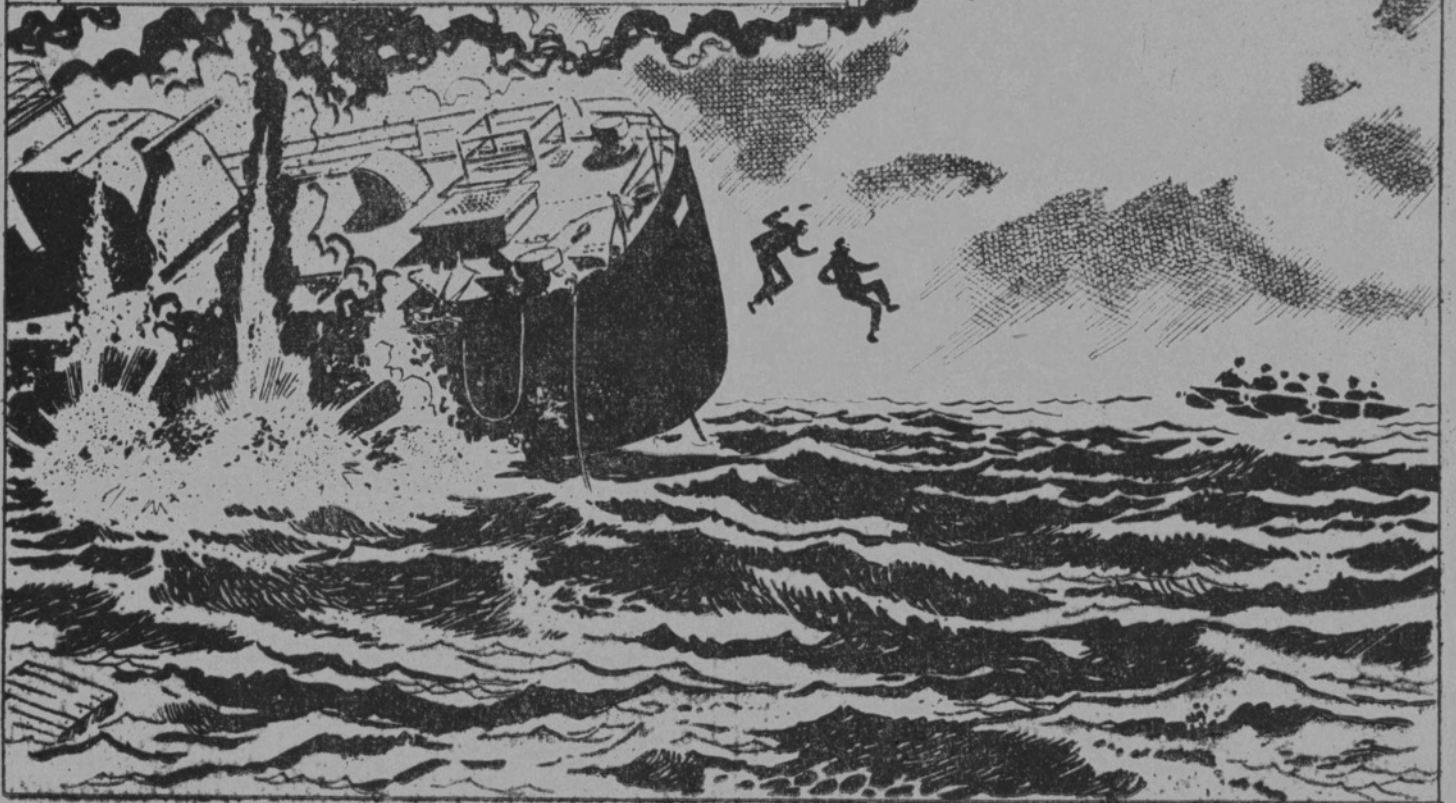
DID YOU GET THAT SIGNAL OFF? GOOD! COME UP TOP AT THE DOUBLE AND ABANDON SHIP! YOU'VE ABOUT THREE MINUTES LEFT—AND WAYMAN, TELL THAT BROTHER OF YOURS HE DID A GOOD JOB STAYING DOWN THERE.



LIEUTENANT WAYMAN GRIMACED WRYLY AS HE HEARD THE CAPTAIN'S COMPLIMENT! BUT EVERY SECOND HE LINGERED LESSENED HIS CHANCE OF ESCAPE....



BY THE TIME HE REACHED THE BLESSED OPEN AIR OF THE UPPER DECK, THE GRADNEL WAS STEADYING HERSELF FOR THE FINAL PLUNGE BENEATH THE WAVES. JARDINE HIMSELF WAS WAITING ON THE QUARTERDECK....



THE LIGHT FROM THE BLAZING GRAPNEL BATHED THE SWIMMING SURVIVORS IN A BLOOD-RED GLOW!



THE DESTROYER WENT DOWN IN COMPLETE SILENCE AND THOSE LEFT BEHIND STARED AT EACH OTHER WITH RED-RIMMED EYES. IN THE DARKNESS, LIEUTENANT WAYMAN HEARD HIS NAME BEING CALLED...



EVEN IN THE DARKNESS PETER'S TENSENESS COMMUNICATED ITSELF TO HIS ELDER BROTHER...



SLOWLY THE ATLANTIC CURRENTS DRIFTED THE SURVIVORS APART INTO SMALL ISLANDS OF FLOATING HUMANITY! LIEUTENANT WAYMAN AND HIS BROTHER ATTACHED THEMSELVES TO ONE SUCH GROUP...



AS PETER ANSWERED, THE CHILLED SEAMEN RAISED A CHEER — A THIN SOUND THAT DRIFTED AWAY OVER THE RISING CRESTS OF THE WAVES, AND WAS LOST IN AN INSTANT...



THE NIGHT WAS LONG! OCCASIONALLY A MAN SPOKE IN A HOARSE WHISPER AND TWICE A PIERCING SCREAM CAME OUT OF THE DARKNESS, SENDING A SHIVER THROUGH THE BODIES OF THE MEN ALREADY WRACKED WITH NUMBING COLD. AT LAST THE FIRST FLIMSY STREAMERS OF DAWN STREAKED THE HORIZON.....



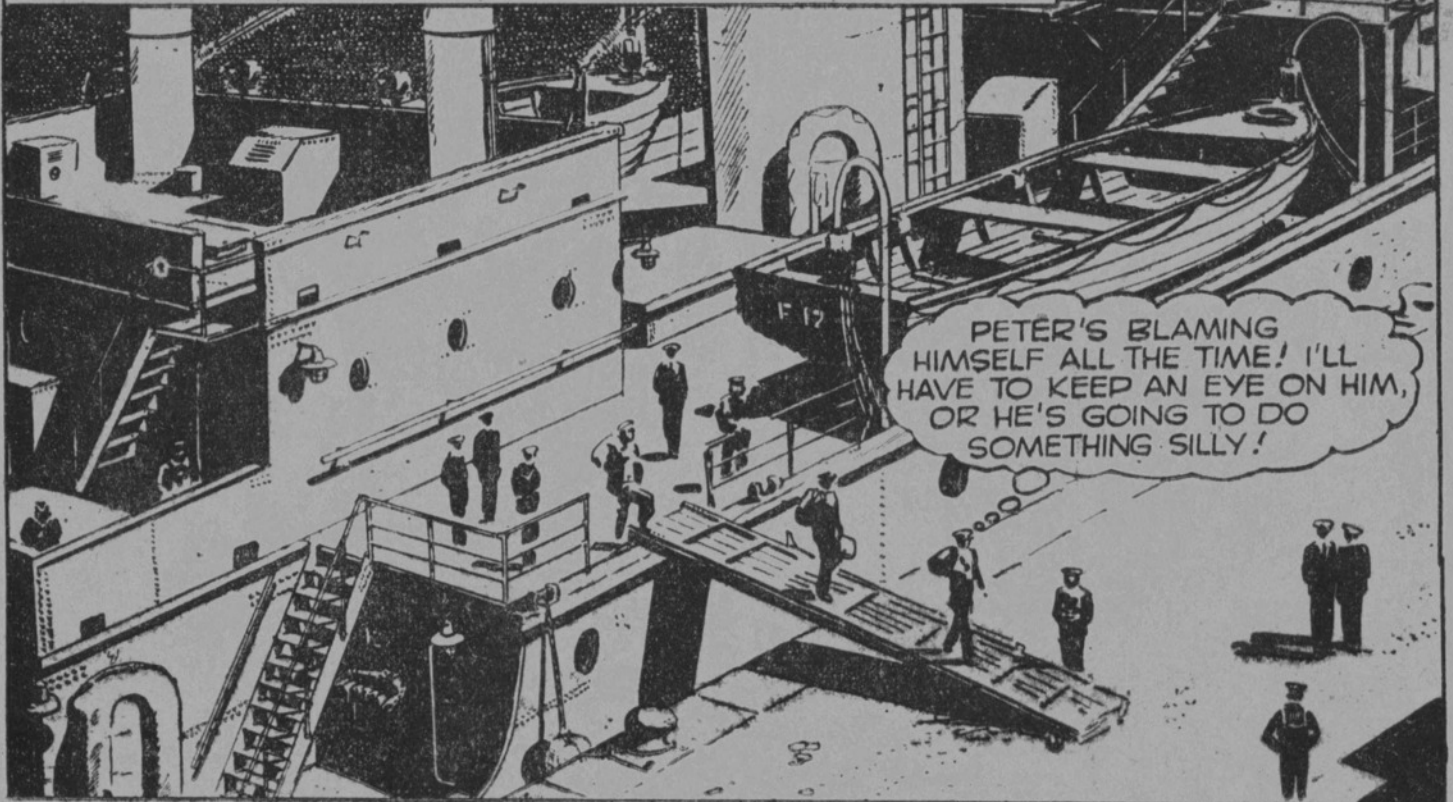
THE FRIGATE CAME UP LIKE A GREY GHOST OUT OF THE MILKY DAWN. FROM THE WATER, GRAPNEL'S SURVIVORS WATCHED THE SEABOAT BEING LOWERED AND PULLED TOWARDS THEM...



THE FRIGATE WASTED NO TIME IN THE AREA! AS SOON AS THE SURVIVORS OF THE GRAPNEL HAD BEEN TAKEN ABOARD, SHE SET COURSE FOR LONDONDERRY. BELOW DECK, WARM AND FED, LIEUTENANT WAYMAN SOUGHT OUT HIS YOUNG BROTHER...



ABRUPTLY, PETER WAYMAN PUSHED PAST HIS BROTHER AND CLIMBED THE LADDER TO THE UPPER DECK. THERE HE REMAINED BROODINGLY STARING ACROSS THE VASTNESS OF THE ATLANTIC. WHEN THE FRIGATE DOCKED AT LONDONDERRY, HE PURPOSELY AVOIDED HIS BROTHER....



AT THE GREY-WALLED NAVAL BARRACKS, CHATHAM, THE GRAPNEL SURVIVORS WERE RE-KITTED WITHIN A FEW HOURS AND SENT ON SEVEN DAYS' LEAVE...



DAVE WAYMAN SAID NOTHING TO HIS MOTHER, BUT HE WAS MORE CONCERNED THAN EVER ABOUT HIS BROTHER. THEN, A WEEK AFTER THEY BOTH RETURNED TO BARRACKS, DAVE HAD NEWS OF HIS NEW SHIP....



NO, HE'S NOT, SIR—
BUT I COULD PUT HIM ON!
I EXPECT THERE'S QUITE A
FEW ALREADY NAMED ON
THE CHIT WHO WOULD
PREFER TO SPEND
ANOTHER WEEK HERE IN
BARRACKS INSTEAD!



TWO DAYS LATER, THE NAVAL DRAFT
KNOWN AS "JOB NUMBER 216"
PREPARED TO DEPART TO AN UNKNOWN
DESTINATION! DAVE'S HINT HAD BEEN
TAKEN — PETER WAS AMONG THEM....



HAVE YOU
HEARD THE BUZZ,
PETE? THEY RECKON
WE'RE GOING TO A
BATTLE-WAGON!

IN LONDON, THE RATINGS WERE JOINED BY
OFFICERS OF THE SAME DRAFT....



DAVE! I
DIDN'T KNOW
YOU WERE ON
THIS DRAFT!

HALLO, PETER! YES,
SEVERAL OF THE OLD
GRAPNEL'S CREW ARE HERE!
I HEAR WE'RE BOUND FOR
A SCOTTISH PORT—BUT
KEEP THAT UNDER
YOUR HAT.

Chapter 2. A SECOND CHANCE

IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE AFTERNOON OF THE FOLLOWING DAY THAT THEY ARRIVED AT THEIR DESTINATION.... A SMALL PORT IN THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND.



PETER HEARD HIS NAME CALLED, FOLLOWED BY CRAFT NUMBER 457 AND EARLY THE FOLLOWING MORNING, HE WAS TAKEN OUT TO THE LONG LINE OF MOORED TANK LANDING CRAFT.



BLOW YOUR LUCK, MATE, IF YOU'RE JOINING THIS FLOTILLA! THESE TUBS ARE SO SMALL YOU CAN'T EVEN STAND UPRIGHT ON THE MESSDECK!

THANKS FOR THE WELCOME!

THE PESSIMISTIC RATING HELPED HIM ABOARD AND PETER TOSSED HIS HAMMOCK AND KITBAG THROUGH THE SQUARE HATCH ON THE QUARTERDECK AND FOLLOWED IT DOWN INTO THE CREW'S MESS....

WHO'S THE COX'N?
I'M TELEGRAPHIST
WAYMAN, JUST COME
ABOARD TO JOIN.

I'M 'OPKINS. I'M THE
COX'N. STOW YOUR KIT BAG
AND 'AMMOCK WHERE YOU CAN
FIND A SPACE AND THEN REPORT
TO THE SKIPPER IN THE
WARDROOM.



THE WARDROOM WAS ALMOST IMMEDIATELY ABOVE THE SEAMEN'S MESS-DECK AND WHEN PETER KNOCKED AND ENTERED — HE RECEIVED A SHOCK...



THIS IS LIEUTENANT SHARPE. HE IS RETURNING FOR GENERAL SERVICE DUTY AND I AM TAKING COMMAND OF T.L.C FOUR-FIVE-SEVEN. THERE IS A TR-FOUR SET AND A PORTABLE FORTY-SIX SET ABOARD. CAN YOU HANDLE THEM?

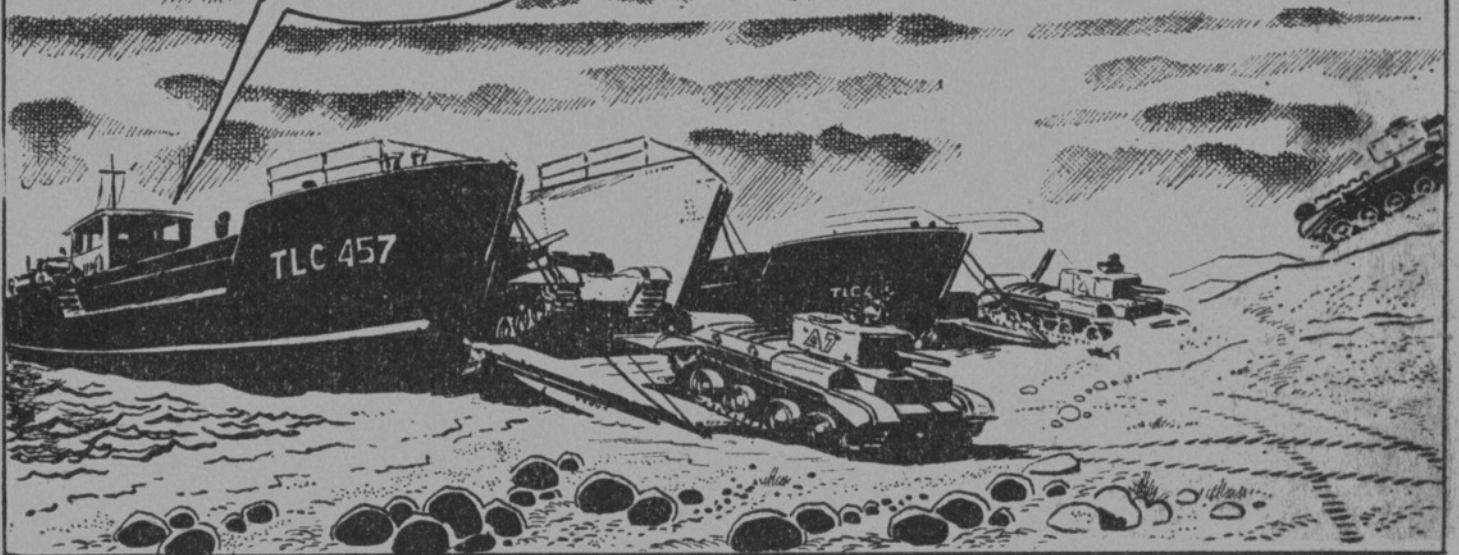


DAVE WAYMAN DISMISSED HIS BROTHER AND LIEUTENANT SHARPE LOOKED UP WITH A COCKED EYEBROW....



NOW THAT THE LANDING CRAFT FLOTILLA HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP TO FULL CREW STRENGTH, A PROGRAMME OF HARD TRAINING COMMENCED.

GET THAT RAMP UP AS SOON AS THE LAST TANK'S OFF-AND SLAP IT ABOUT! ONE DAY YOUR LIVES MAY DEPEND ON HOW FAST YOU CAN DO THE JOB!



TWO DAYS LATER, THE FLOTILLA MADE ANOTHER PRACTICE LANDING - THIS TIME AT NIGHT WITH SUPPORT FROM ROCKET SHIPS. VERY FEW WORDS HAD PASSED BETWEEN THE BROTHERS SINCE THEY HAD JOINED THE LANDING CRAFT.

WHAT A SIGHT! EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT, PETE?

I'M NOT GETTING READY TO JUMP OVERBOARD IF THAT'S WHAT'S WORRYING YOU!



DAVE'S LIPS TIGHTENED WITH THE EFFORT HE MADE TO CONTROL HIMSELF. HE KNEW THE MEMORY OF THE GRAPNEL'S LAST HOURS STILL CAST A HAUNTING SHADOW OVER PETER'S LIFE....



DURING THE FORENOON WATCH, THE BLUNT-NOSED CRAFT BUFFETED THEIR WAY BACK TO HARBOUR AND THE OFFICERS WERE CALLED TO A BRIEFING AT FLOTILLA H.Q. ASHORE....



THAT EVENING, ABOARD THE CRAFT...

ANY MORE LETTERS
TO GO ASHORE, BOYS?
THIS IS YOUR LAST
CHANCE TO WRITE
YOUR WILLS!



TURN IT UP,
COX'N. I BET WE'RE
JUST GOING ON
ANOTHER DUMMY RUN!

AT FIRST LIGHT, THE CRAFT MOVED ON TO
THE BEACH AND A PROCESSION OF TANKS,
BREN-GUN CARRIERS AND TOUGH-FACED
COMMANDOS WENT ABOARD. THEN
THE FLOTILLA HEADED FOR THE OPEN
SEA....

THIS IS THE CAPTAIN SPEAKING! NO
DUMMY RUN TODAY-THIS IS THE
REAL THING! BY DAWN WE'LL BE
OFF NORWAY AND WE'RE GOING
TO LAND TANKS AND COMMANDOS
IN THE PORT OF TRUROCK!
ROCKET SHIPS AND A CRUISER,
H.M.S. CLIVEN, WILL GIVE US
COVERING FIRE.



THE HOURS PASSED SLOWLY UNTIL DAWN'S PALE
LIGHT LIT THE HORIZON. TENSELY, THE CREW
CLOSED UP TO ACTION STATIONS. THE ENEMY
COAST WAS AHEAD.

THERE'S
TRUROCK, MAJOR!
H-HOUR IN FIFTY-
EIGHT MINUTES!
WE'RE BANG
ON TIME!

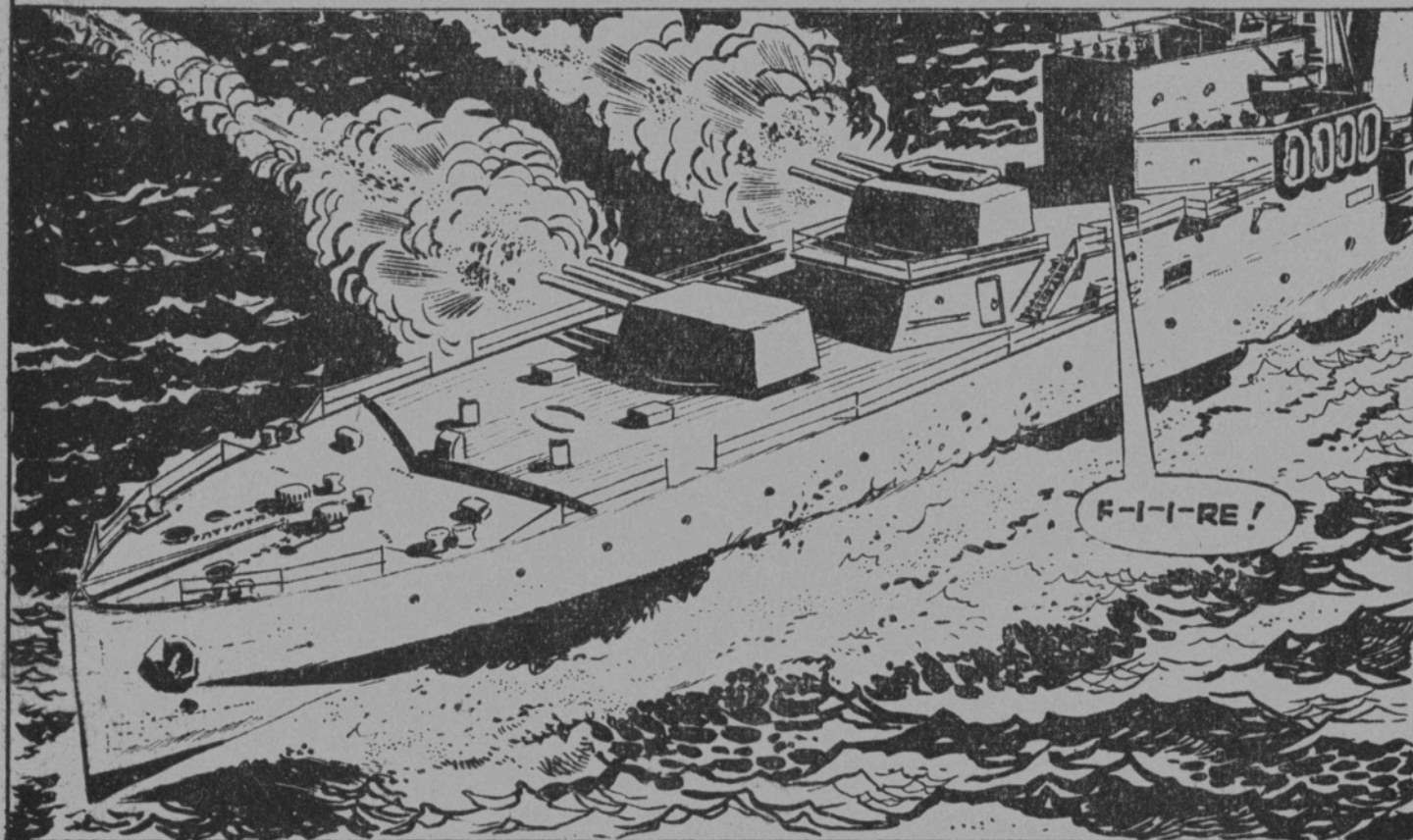


IT SEEMS QUIET
ENOUGH! LET'S HOPE
WE'RE GOING TO CATCH
JERRY NAPPING!

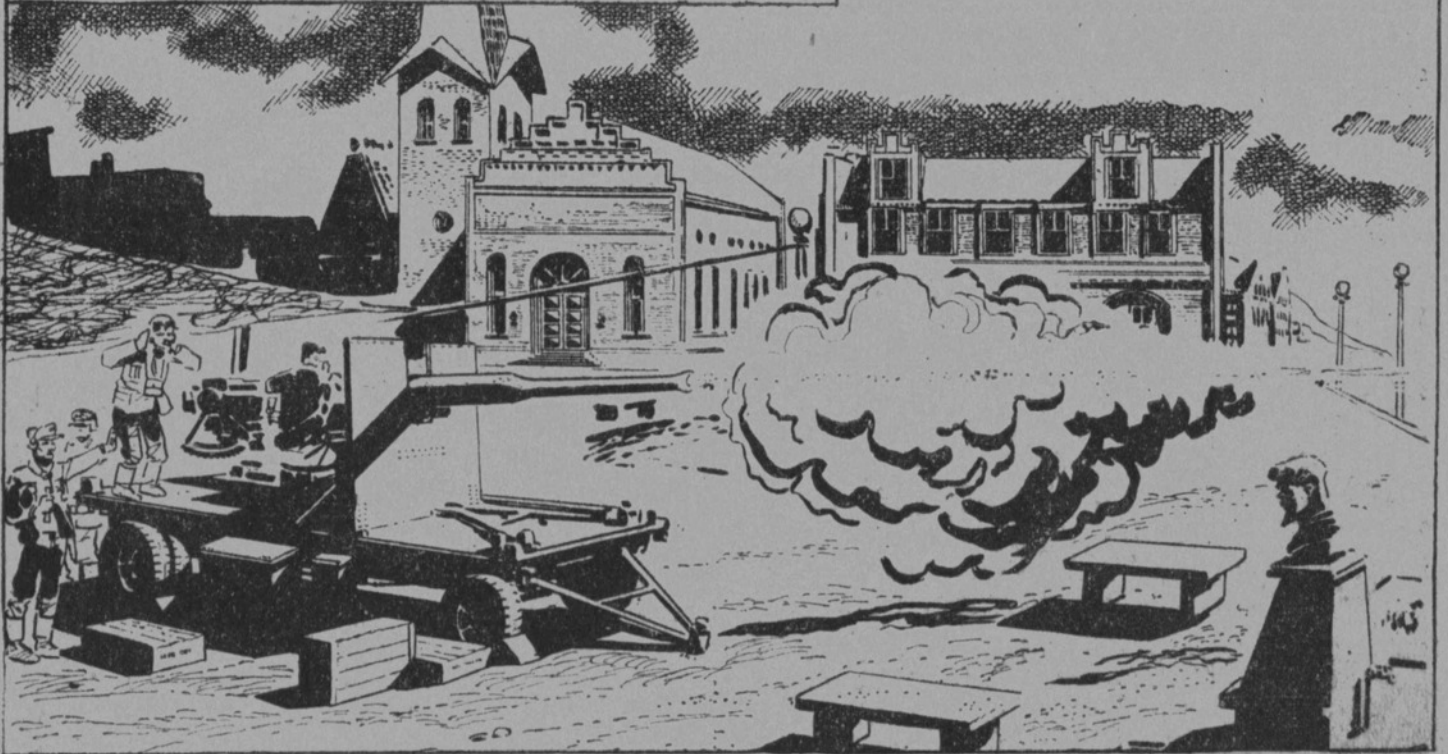
UNOPPOSED, THE INVASION FORCE CLOSED IN ON THEIR OBJECTIVE. IN THE COLD, SHARP DAWN LIGHT, THE PORT INSTALLATIONS AND BUILDINGS OF THE TOWN STOOD OUT WITH RAZOR-EDGED CLEARNESS.



IN COMPLETE AND UNNATURAL SILENCE, THE LANDING CRAFT CREPT TOWARDS THE SHELVING BEACH. TWENTY YARDS — FIFTEEN — TEN.... THEN OUT AT SEA THE PROTECTING GUNS OF THE CLIVEDEN SUDDENLY OPENED A TREMENDOUS BARRAGE...



AND AS THE CLIVEDEN WAS STILL ILLUMINATED BY THE BRILLIANCE OF HER OWN GUN FLASHES — THE WAITING NAZIS UNLEASHED THEIR REPLY...



IN THE HARBOUR, THE LANDING CRAFT HIT THE BEACH! THE RAMP DOORS CRASHED ON TO THE SHINGLE AND THE COMMANDOS AND THEIR VEHICLES WERE ON ENEMY TERRITORY.



The Crimson Sea

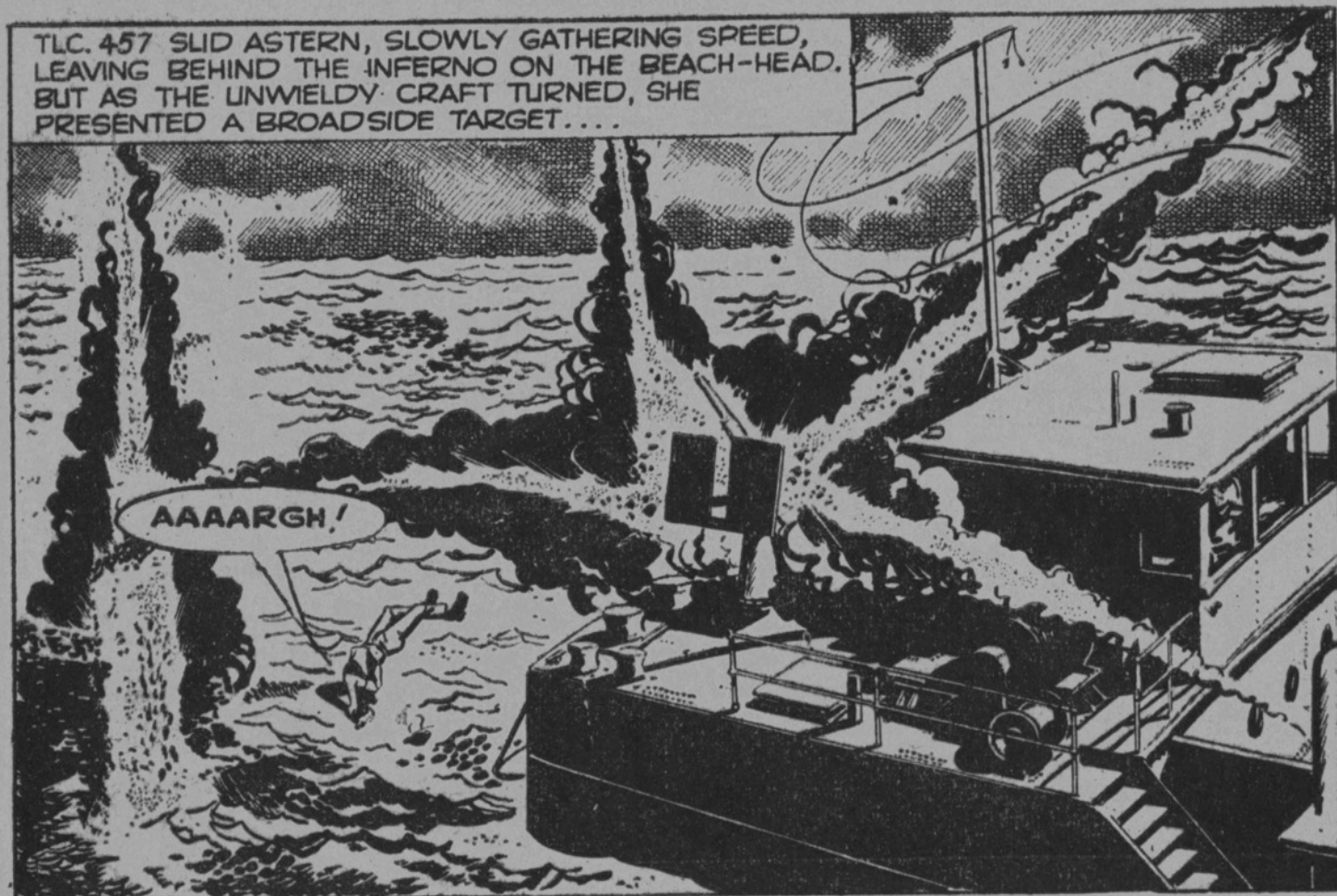
A CRESCENDO OF SOUND FILLED THE AIR! ROARING WATER SPOUTS ROSE ON ALL SIDES OF THE LANDING CRAFT AS GERMAN ARTILLERY SEARCHED FOR THE RANGE.

FULL ASTERN
BOTH! KEEP THE
WHEEL AMIDSHIPS,
COX'N.



TLC. 457 SLID ASTERN, SLOWLY GATHERING SPEED, LEAVING BEHIND THE INFERNO ON THE BEACH-HEAD. BUT AS THE UNWILDY CRAFT TURNED, SHE PRESENTED A BROADSIDE TARGET....

AAAARGH!



PETER SWUNG ROUND FROM HIS RADIO SET AS A PIECE OF SHRAPNEL CRASHED INTO THE WHEELHOUSE, HE GAZED WITH HORRIFIED EYES AT THE COX'N...

HE - HE'S BEEN HIT!



PETER SPRANG FORWARD EVEN THOUGH HE WAS TREMBLING VIOLENTLY AND WHEN HE SPOKE INTO THE VOICE-PIPE TO THE BRIDGE, HIS VOICE WAS A HARSH CROAK...

HOPKINS IS DEAD, SIR! WAYMAN AT THE WHEEL.



EVEN AS PETER SPOKE, ANOTHER SHELL SMASHED INTO THE HULL OF THE CRAFT.

STAY AT THE WHEEL, PETER! SET THE TELEGRAPH FOR BOTH ENGINES FULL AHEAD - WE'LL TRY TO GET BACK TO THE CRUISER!



The Crimson Sea

THE ASSAULT FORCE, HAVING LANDED ALL THE COMMANDOS AND VEHICLES, WITHDREW FROM THE HARBOUR, BUT FOUR CRAFT WERE LEFT LYING ON THE BEACH. BADLY MAULED, TLC.457 WAS SINKING AS SHE WALLOWED BACK TOWARDS THE CLIVEDEN...



LESS THAN ONE HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE CRUISER TLC.457 LOST FORWARD MOVEMENT ALTOGETHER AS HER ENGINE ROOM FLOODED.



FLOUNDERING THROUGH THE ICY WATERS, THE SURVIVORS OF TLC. 457 REACHED THE SIDE OF THE CRUISER.



LIEUTENANT DAVE WAYMAN WENT UP TO HIS YOUNG BROTHER...



IN THE WARDROOM OF THE CRUISER, THE PROGRESS OF THE OPERATION WAS BEING DISCUSSED...

THE COMMANDOS HAVE OCCUPIED THE TOWN BUT THEY'RE PINNED DOWN BY GERMAN PILL-BOXES AND MACHINE-GUN POSITIONS THAT SURROUND THE TOWN — AND SO FAR WE'VE NOT BEEN ABLE TO HIT THE REFINERY!





THE VALLEY IN WHICH
THE REFINERY IS SITED IS
FAR DEEPER THAN WE
THOUGHT! WE'RE FIRING
BLIND! WE MAY NOT EVEN
BE DROPPING SHELLS
ON TO THE TARGET
AT ALL!

ADMIRAL FARNSHAW, IN CHARGE OF THE LAND AND SEA
FORCES ENGAGED, STARED AT THE MODEL FOR A LONG
TIME. WHEN HE LOOKED UP HIS JAW WAS SET AND
HIS LIPS WERE A THIN, DETERMINED LINE....



WE MUST
PUT A FIRE
CONTROL OFFICER
ASHORE! HE MUST GET
INTO THAT VALLEY AND
RADIO BACK FIRE
ORDERS—REPORTING
DIRECT TO US WHERE
OUR SHELLS ARE
FALLING!


THE CRUISER'S SIGNAL OFFICER PUT FORWARD A SUGGESTION...



THE TWO BROTHERS WERE CHANGING INTO KHAKI BATTLEDRESS WHEN THE SIGNAL OFFICER EXPLAINED TO LT. WAYMAN WHAT WAS REQUIRED.




THE SIGNAL OFFICER WAS PASSING THROUGH THE MESS-DECK DOOR BEFORE PETER SPOKE. HIS FACE WAS PALE BUT HIS VOICE WAS STEADY...



I'LL GO ASHORE WITH LIEUTENANT WAYMAN, SIR! I CAN OPERATE A FORTY-SIX SET AND THAT'S THE TYPE YOU'LL NEED FOR THIS JOB.

THE SIGNAL OFFICER STARED KEENLY AT PETER AND LOOKED AT DAVE WITH A GRIN.



WHAT DO YOU SAY, LIEUTENANT? WOULD YOU LIKE THIS MAN AS YOUR OPERATOR?

HE WILL DO FINE, SIR!

Chapter 3. MISSION ASHORE

LIEUTENANT WAYMAN AND PETER WERE GIVEN A SHORT BRIEFING ON THEIR MISSION AND SUPPLIED WITH GRENADES, A THOMPSON SUB-MACHINE GUN — AND THE VITAL RADIO SET...



AS THE PINNACE HEADED TOWARDS THE SMOKE ENGULFED JETTY, WELL-DIRECTED MORTAR FIRE CAME DANGEROUSLY CLOSE AND DAVE SENSED THE KEYED-UP NERVES OF HIS YOUNGER BROTHER. BUT THERE WAS NO TIME FOR TALK...



ON THE JETTY THE CLATTERING STACCATO CLAMOUR OF GUNFIRE PLAYED A GRIM OVERTURE TO THEIR HAZARDOUS MISSION...



WHEN THEY REACHED THE TOWN ITSELF, THEY WERE APPALLED BY THE DESTRUCTION WROUGHT BY THE DESPERATE FIGHTING THAT WAS STILL GOING ON....



THE COMMAND H.Q. WAS NO MORE THAN A SMOKE-BLACKENED GUTTED SHELL OF WHAT HAD ONCE BEEN A BAKER'S SHOP.



THE PINE-COVERED FOOTHILLS OF THE MOUNTAINS CAME RIGHT TO THE EDGE OF THE TOWN ON THE NORTHERN SIDE. ONCE LIEUTENANT WAYMAN AND PETER BROKE CLEAR OF THE SHATTERED BUILDINGS, THEY BEGAN A LUNG-BURSTING CLIMB THROUGH THE TREES....



The Crimson Sea

AS PETER EASED HIS SHOULDERS OUT OF THE RADIO SET HARNESS—A BOULDER CAME CLATTERING DOWN THE SLOPES ABOVE THEM...



LIEUTENANT WAYMAN WHIRLED AROUND, THE MUZZLE OF HIS SUB-MACHINE GUN SWINGING UP AND SPOUTING A STREAM OF FLAME....



THE IMPACT OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED HIT PETER LIKE A HAMMER BLOW! HIS FACE WAS CHALKY-WHITE AS HE AND HIS BROTHER SKIRTED THE FALLEN GERMANS....



THREE TIMES THEY WERE FORCED TO DROP ON THEIR FACES AND CRAWL SLOWLY THROUGH THE TANGLED UNDERGROWTH TO AVOID GERMAN PATROLS. THEN, AT LAST...

THERE IT IS!
THERE'S THE
REFINERY,
PETER!

ALL WE HAVE TO DO
IS GET DOWN THERE—
THROUGH JERRY'S MAIN
LINE! THAT WON'T
BE EASY!



THEY CLAMBERED DOWN THE STEEP SIDE OF THE VALLEY AND THEIR CAUTION GREW AS THEY APPROACHED THE MAIN GERMAN DEFENSIVE POSITIONS, WHERE MACHINE-GUN EMPLACEMENTS WERE SET UP EVERY TWENTY OR THIRTY YARDS...

IF THEY
LOOK ROUND,
WE'VE HAD
IT!



AND THEN, SUDDENLY, THEY WERE PAST THE GERMAN POSITIONS AND IN CLEAR VIEW OF THE REFINERY.



HAVING SET UP THE RADIO IN THE SHELTER OF THE ROCK FACE, PETER WHISPERED HIS CALL-SIGN INTO THE MICROPHONE.



ABOARD THE CRUISER THE TENSE GROUP OF OFFICERS IN THE W/T OFFICE SIGHED WITH RELIEF AS PETER'S VOICE CAME OVER THE LOUD-SPEAKER....



QUIETLY, PETER RELAYED TO HIS BROTHER THE PREPARATIONS TAKING PLACE ABOARD THE CRUISER. THEN THE FIRST SHELL WHINED OVERHEAD...



WELL SHORT
AND AWAY TO STARBOARD
IF THAT'S THE RANGE
THEY'VE BEEN FIRING, NO
WONDER THEY HAVEN'T
HIT ANYTHING!

DAVE WAYMAN SPREAD OUT THE LARGE-SCALE MAP OF THE AREA WHICH HAD BEEN SPECIALLY RULED OFF IN SQUARES—FIFTY YARDS TO EACH SQUARE...



TELL 'EM
THAT SHELL
LANDED IN 'SQUARE
'ABLE SEVEN'. INCREASE
RANGE SIX HUNDRED
YARDS, PORT THREE
HUNDRED.

OKAY.
I'VE GOT
IT!

The Crimson Sea

IN A VOICE WHICH HE CAREFULLY CONTROLLED, PETER RADIOED BACK THE FIRE ORDERS TO THE *CLIVEDEN*. SECONDS PASSED AND THEN ANOTHER SHELL WHISTLED OVERHEAD TO LAND WITH A SICKENING CRASH THAT SHOOK THE HILLSIDE...



THE THIRD RANGING SHELL HIT THE EXTREME CORNER OF THE REFINERY BOUNDARY...



PETER REPEATED HIS BROTHER'S INSTRUCTIONS AND THEN THEY BOTH WAITED WHILE THE SECONDS TICKED AWAY. ABOARD THE *CLIVEDEN*, ADMIRAL FARNSHAW WAS ON THE BRIDGE...



ON THE HILLSIDE, PETER AND LIEUTENANT DAVE WAYMAN FLUNG THEMSELVES DOWN, SCRABBLING DESPERATELY FOR COVER AS THE SCREAMING SALVOS FROM THE *CLIVEDEN* FILLED THE AIR WITH THE SOUND OF IMMINENT DESTRUCTION. THE EARTH ITSELF SEEMED TO BE ERUPTING....



EXPLOSION FOLLOWED EXPLOSION IN A DEAFENING CHAIN-REACTION THAT SEEMED TO HAVE NO END! A GIANT FIRE-BALL SEARED OUTWARDS, BURNING EVERY BUSH AND BLADE OF GRASS IN ITS PATH.



ALL EFFORT AT CONCEALMENT ABANDONED, THEY SCRAMBLED AWAY FROM THE LUNG-SCORCHING HEAT OF THE BLAZING REFINERY....



THE GERMANS WERE SHOCKED AND ENRAGED BY THE DESTRUCTION OF THE REFINERY. THEY WERE OUT FOR SWIFT REVENGE....



AS HIS BROTHER FELL, PETER TUGGED ONE OF THE HAND GRENADES FROM HIS BELT AND PULLED THE PIN. HIS ACTIONS NOW WERE AUTOMATIC, SELF-PRESERVATION WAS HIS ONLY CONSCIOUS THOUGHT. DELIBERATELY HE LOBBED THE GRENADE TOWARDS THE BUNCHED GERMANS...



WHITE-HOT FRAGMENTS FROM THE GRENADE HISSED ABOUT PETER'S EARS AS HE SNATCHED UP THE SNUB-NOSED MACHINE-GUN AGAIN....



The Crimson Sea

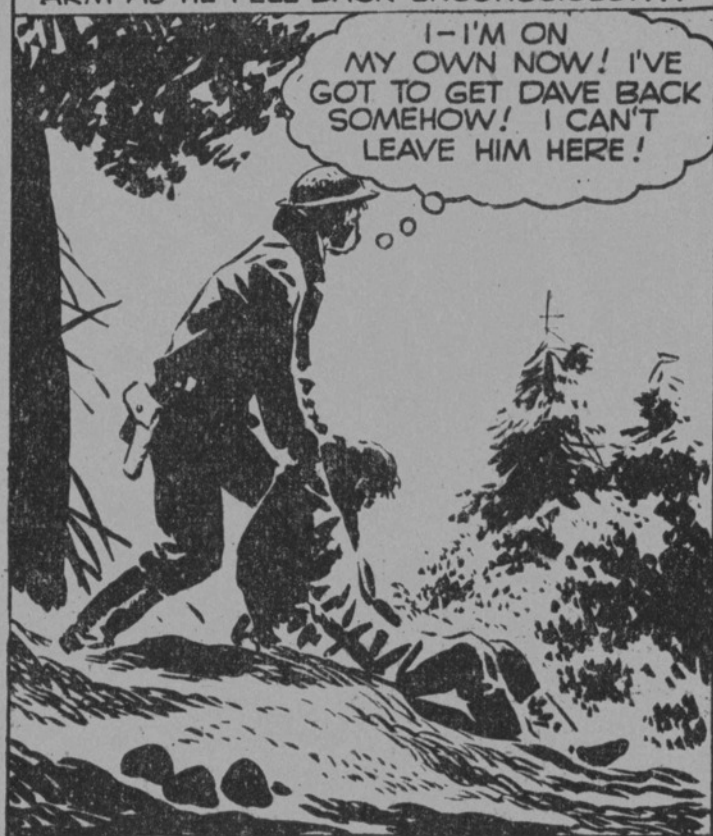
THE SHUDDERING JAR OF THE THOMPSON'S RECOIL NUMBED PETER'S HANDS AS HE FIRED OFF THE FULL MAGAZINE IN ONE LONG DEVASTATING BURST—AND THEN WHEN HE STOPPED, THE VALLEY SEEMED STRANGELY QUIET....



PETER STARED AROUND HIM DAZEDLY THEN HE HEARD A LOW MOAN AND HE SLID DOWN THE SLOPE TO HIS BROTHER...



ANOTHER WHISPER OF PAIN PASSED LIEUTENANT WAYMAN'S LIPS AND HIS FINGERS LOST THEIR GRIP ON PETER'S ARM AS HE FELL BACK UNCONSCIOUS....



THE TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION AT THE REFINERY HAD THROWN THE GERMAN INFANTRY COMMANDER INTO A STATE OF CONFUSION. GREAT GAPS APPEARED IN THE NAZI'S DEFENSIVE LINE AS TROOPS WERE ORDERED BACK TO DEAL WITH THE RAGING FIRES THAT HAD STARTED — AND THROUGH THESE GAPS, PETER MADE HIS WAY UNCHALLENGED...



FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, PETER COLLAPSED WITH HIS UNCONSCIOUS BURDEN INTO THE ARMS OF A BRITISH COMMANDO PATROL...



The Crimson Sea

STEP BY STEP, SHELTERING BEHIND A WITHERING MACHINE-GUN FIRE, THE COMMANDOS WITHDREW TO THE BEACH—AND PETER AND LIEUTENANT WAYMAN WENT WITH THEM...

I AIN'T SORRY TO LEAVE! IT'S NOT THE SORT OF HOLIDAY RESORT I MUCH CARE FOR—GIMME BLACKPOOL ANY DAY!



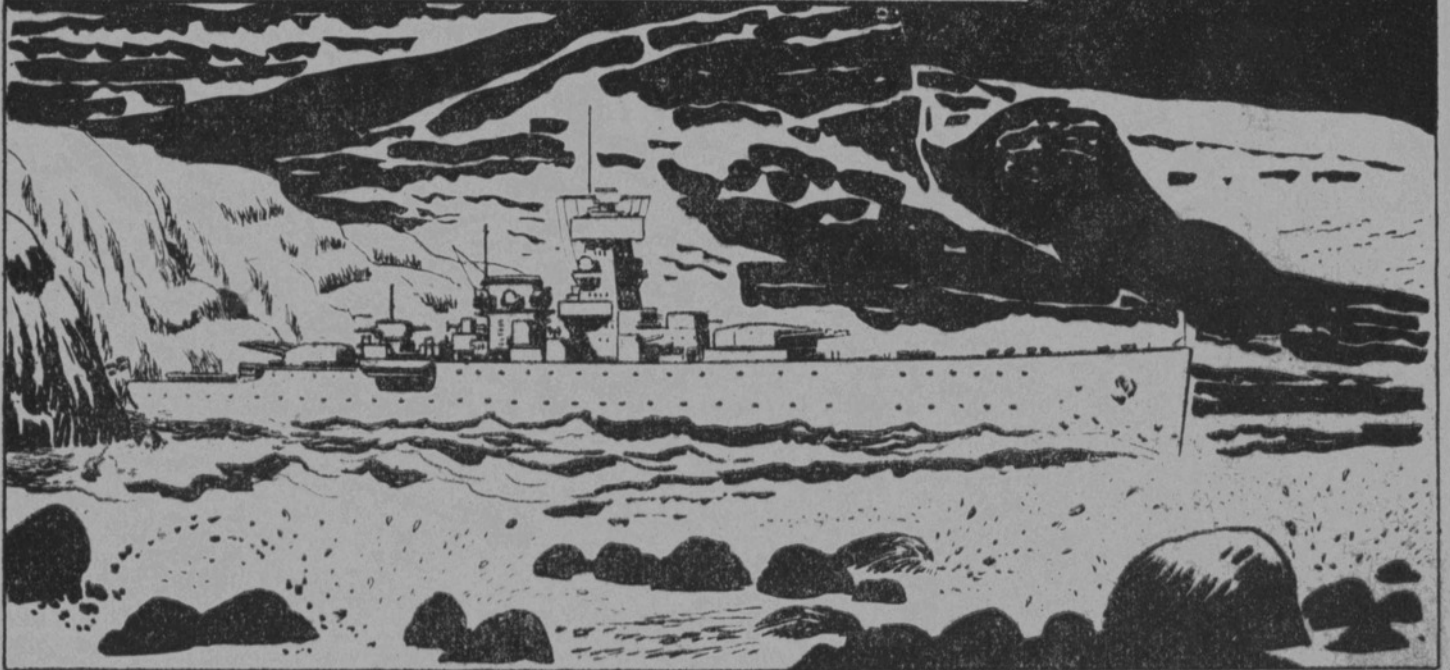
NEWS OF THE OIL REFINERY'S DESTRUCTION WAS FLASHED ACROSS THE LENGTH OF NORWAY—AND ON INTO GERMANY ITSELF. THE GERMAN NAVAL HIGH COMMAND RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY...

THE BRITISH RAIDING FORCES MUST BE LIQUIDATED! NOT ONE MAN OR SHIP MUST RETURN TO ENGLAND! CAPTAIN DORNHEIM, YOU WILL ORDER THE PRINZ WILHELM TO PUT TO SEA IMMEDIATELY! THIS IS AN ORDER FROM THE FUEHRER!

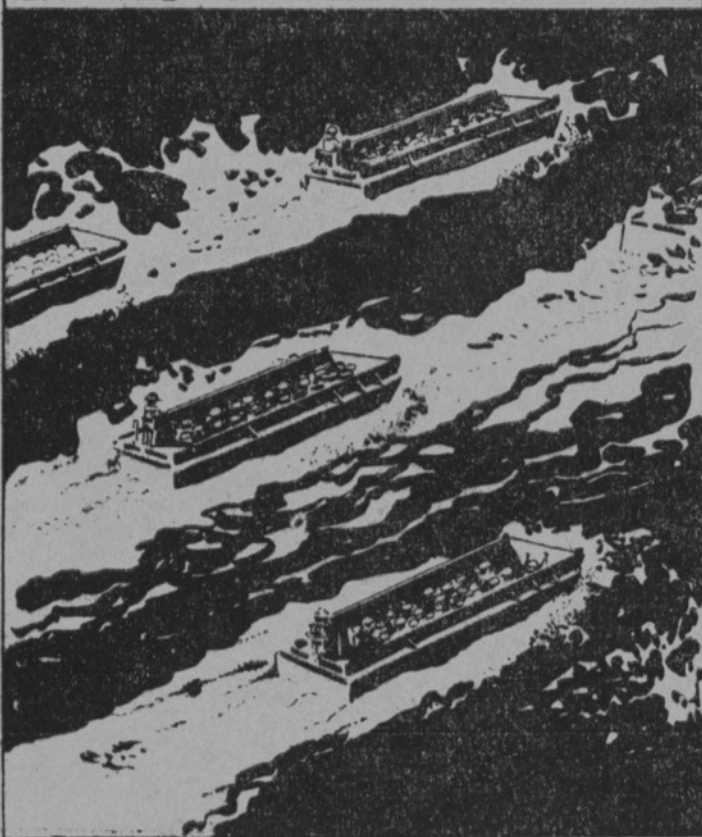


Chapter 4. LAST SIGNAL

THE PRINZ WILHELM, A POCKET-BATTLESHIP AND THE PRIDE OF THE GERMAN NAVY, HAD FOR MONTHS BEEN SKULKING IN TRONDHEIM FIORD, A CONSTANT MENACE TO BRITISH CONVOYS TO RUSSIA. EQUIPPED WITH EIGHT-INCH GUNS AND A SPEED OF 32 KNOTS, SHE WAS A DEADLY FOE....



MEANWHILE, THE BRITISH TASK FORCE SLOWLY SWUNG TOWARDS THE WEST AND HEADED FOR ENGLAND—A SADLY BATTERED BUT TRIUMPHANT COMPANY...



AN HOUR PASSED—TWO HOURS! THE COAST OF NORWAY SANK BELOW THE HORIZON...



ALL EYES ON THE CLIVEDEN'S BRIDGE SWUNG TO THE PORT QUARTER! WHEN ADMIRAL FARNSHAW BROKE THE SILENCE HIS VOICE WAS CRISP AND DECISIVE...



AS THE BRITISH CRUISER CLEARED DECKS FOR ACTION, AN AIR OF GRIM DETERMINATION PERVADED THE WHOLE SHIP.

MAKE A SIGNAL TO THE HOME FLEET, REPEATED TO ADMIRALTY, CAPTAIN! WE'VE BEEN WAITING A LONG TIME TO GET THE PRINZ WILHELM OUT AT SEA. NOW WE'VE GOT HER OUT—**WE MUST DESTROY HER!**



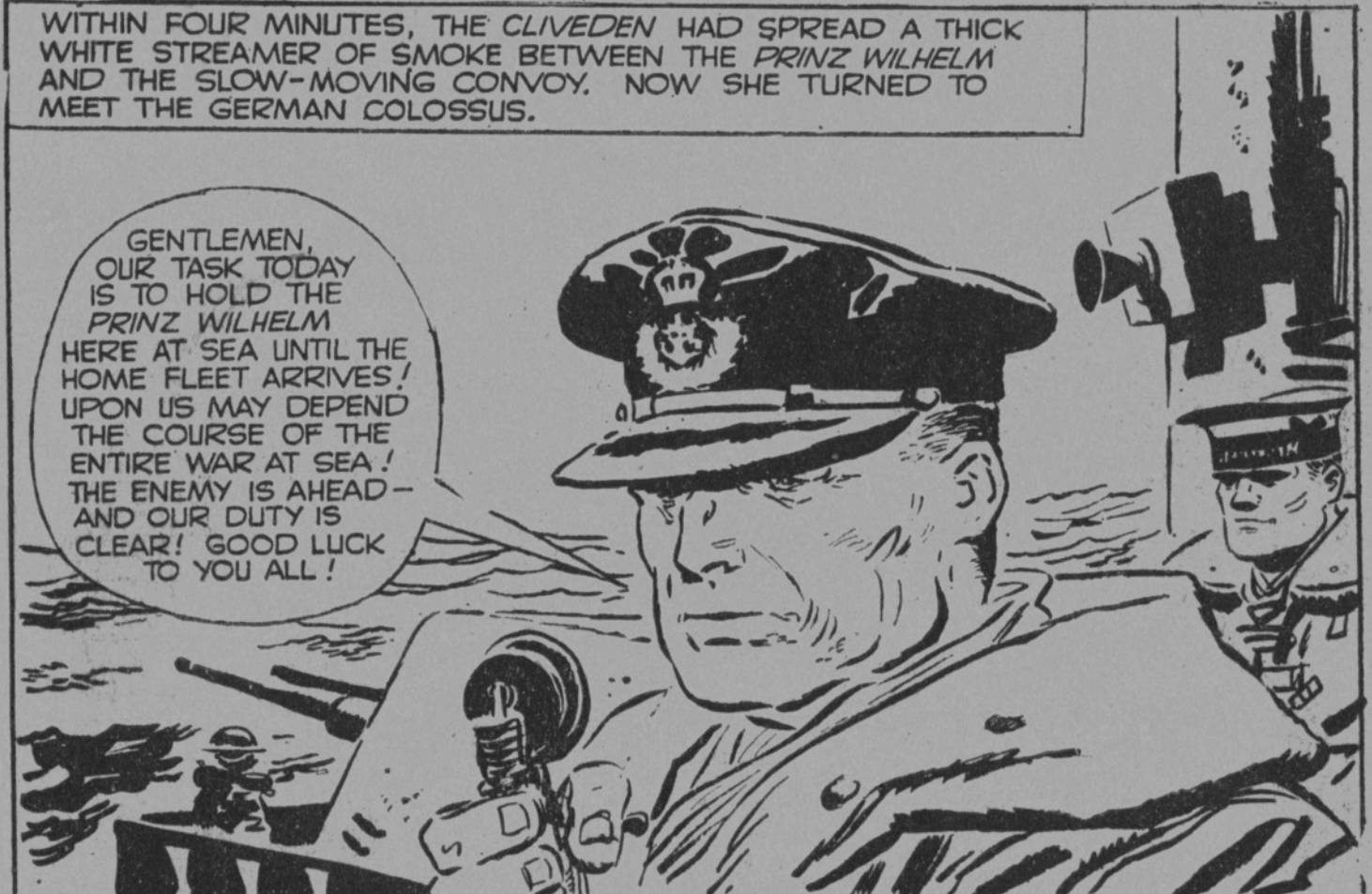
THE CLIVEDEN'S DECKS THROBBED TO THE INCREASED ENGINE REVOLUTIONS AS SHE MOUNTED TOP SPEED AND ALTERED COURSE....

SHE'S HIDING US FROM JERRY TO GIVE US A CHANCE TO GET AWAY! BROTHER, THIS IS IT — THE NAVY'S GOING INTO ACTION!



WITHIN FOUR MINUTES, THE CLIVEDEN HAD SPREAD A THICK WHITE STREAMER OF SMOKE BETWEEN THE PRINZ WILHELM AND THE SLOW-MOVING CONVOY. NOW SHE TURNED TO MEET THE GERMAN COLOSSUS.

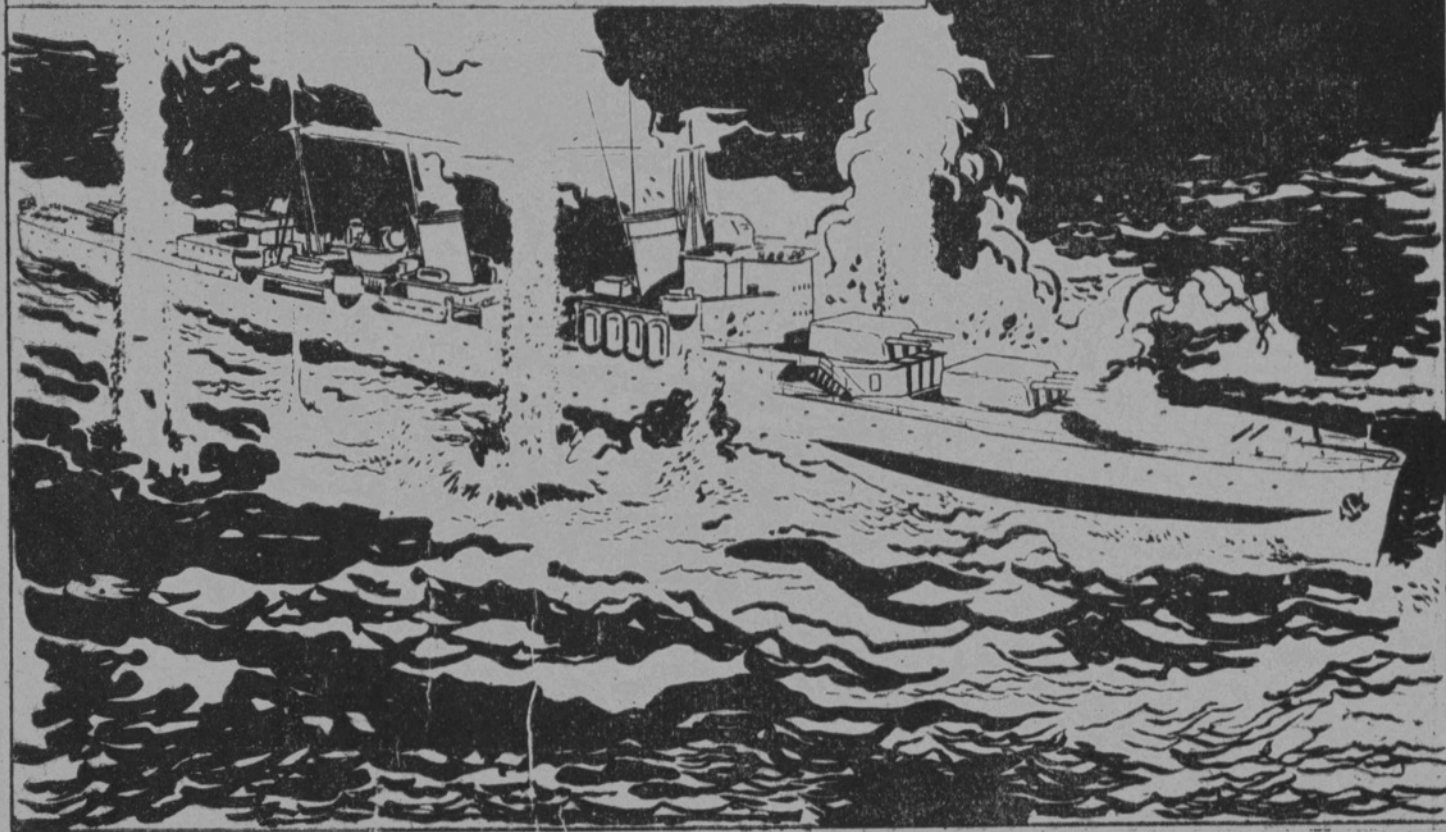
GENTLEMEN, OUR TASK TODAY IS TO HOLD THE PRINZ WILHELM HERE AT SEA UNTIL THE HOME FLEET ARRIVES! UPON US MAY DEPEND THE COURSE OF THE ENTIRE WAR AT SEA! THE ENEMY IS AHEAD — AND OUR DUTY IS CLEAR! GOOD LUCK TO YOU ALL!



THE CLIVEDEN'S BOWS BIT INTO THE OILY SWELL OF THE NORTH SEA, SHEERING THROUGH THE WATER AND CLOSING THE RANGE WITH EVERY SECOND. IN THE GUN TURRETS THE GUN CREWS WAITED...



AGAIN AND AGAIN THE 8-INCH GUNS OF THE GERMAN POCKET-BATTLESHIP FLASHED FIRE! SHELL-BURSTS ENVELOPED THE CLIVEDEN IN A CURTAIN OF WATER — AND STILL SHE WAS UNABLE TO HIT BACK....



THE SURVIVORS FROM THE ASSAULT FORCES WHO HAD BEEN TAKEN ABOARD THE *CLIVEDEN* WERE LED BELOW DECKS. LT. WAYMAN WAS TAKEN TO THE WARDROOM WHICH HAD BEEN TURNED INTO A TEMPORARY SICK-BAY AND PETER WAS ACCOMMODATED ON THE CRUISER'S W/T MESS-DECK...



HOLD TIGHT, MATE — LET'S GET THIS HOSE OUT IN CASE IT'S NEEDED A BIT SHARPISH!

I—I'M ONLY IN THE WAY HERE! I—I'M GOING UP TOP!

THE CRAWLING FEAR THAT PETER HAD FELT INSIDE HIM WHEN HE HAD BEEN BELOW DECKS DURING THE *GRAPNEL*'S LAST MOMENTS HAD CLAMPED ITS COLD HAND ON HIM... AS HE CLIMBED INTO THE OPEN, *PRINZ WILHELM* REGISTERED HER FIRST HIT ON THE *CLIVEDEN*....



THE — THE MESS-DECK! THEY'VE HIT THE MESS DECK!

THE BRITISH CRUISER STAGGERED UNDER THE TERRIFIC IMPACT OF THE EIGHT INCH SHELL EXPLODING INSIDE HER HULL. BUT NOW SHE WAS WITHIN RANGE, HER SIX-INCH GUNS BEGAN TO HIT BACK...



COME ON, LADS! LET'S SHOW THE BUZZARDS HOW TO SHOOT! IF WE'D BEEN HANDLING THOSE JERRY GUNS, THE FIGHT WOULD HAVE BEEN OVER BY NOW!

THE DISASTER THAT HAD ANNIHILATED THE W/T MESS AND THE *CLIVEDEN*'S COMMUNICATION RATINGS, SHOCKED PETER OUT OF HIS PANIC. INSTEAD OF RACING ON TO THE EXPOSED UPPER DECK HE MADE HIS WAY TOWARDS THE WARDROOM WHERE HIS BROTHER LAY. . . .



DAVE — IT WAS
AWFUL! I'D JUST LEFT
THE W/T MESS WHEN THE
SHELL CAME INBOARD!
THE MESS WAS
WIPE OUT! EVERYTHING...!

WE'RE IN A
TOUGH SPOT, PETER,
BUT WE'LL COME
THROUGH!

THE *CLIVEDEN* WAS FIGHTING BACK WITH EVERYTHING SHE HAD. THE FORWARD TURRET OF THE *PRINZ WILHELM* WAS SILENCED BUT STILL A CONCENTRATED BARRAGE OF STEEL CRASHED INTO THE GALLANT CRUISER.



MAKE SURE OUR
POSITION IS GOING OUT
OVER THE RADIO, CAPTAIN!
THE HOME FLEET MUST FIND
THE *PRINZ WILHELM*!

BUT THERE WAS NO ONE ALIVE IN THE RADIO ROOM. . .



BRIDGE TO
W/T OFFICE! BRIDGE
TO W/T OFFICE! CAN
YOU HEAR ME? WHAT'S
HAPPENING DOWN
THERE?

THE CLIVEDEN WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A FLOATING HULK OF BROKEN AND TWISTED METAL. ONLY ONE SIX-INCH GUN REMAINED IN ACTION, ADDING A DEFIANT NOTE TO THE CHATTERING ROAR OF THE POM-POMS AND OERLIKONS. . . .

THERE'S NO REPLY FROM THE W/T OFFICE, SIR! THE VOICE-PIPE MAY BE OUT OF ACTION! I'LL SEND A —



THE CAPTAIN'S LAST WORDS WERE LOST IN A SCREAMING CATACLYSM OF SOUND AS GERMAN SHELLS RIPPED OPEN THE BOWS OF THE CLIVEDEN AND PARTIALLY DEMOLISHED THE BRIDGE. . . .

JENNINGS! JENNINGS—THE CAPTAIN—IS—IS DEAD! MAKE SURE OUR POSITION IS BEING RADIOED! AB—ABSOLUTELY V-VITAL..



IT TOOK LIEUTENANT JENNINGS NO MORE THAN FORTY SECONDS TO DISCOVER THE UNMANNED AND SHATTERED W/T OFFICE. HE ALREADY KNEW OF THE DISASTER TO THE W/T RATINGS' MESS-DECK.

LISTEN!
THIS IS URGENT!
IS THERE A
RADIO OPERATOR
HERE—I NEED A
MAN IMMEDIATELY!



DAVE FELT HIS BROTHER'S HAND TREMBLE AS PETER PUSHED HIMSELF TO HIS FEET...

I'M A
RADIO OP,
SIR!

THANK
HEAVENS! QUICK,
FOLLOW ME.—WE MAY
NOT HAVE MUCH
TIME LEFT!



LESS THAN HALF A MILE AWAY, THE GAUNT OUTLINE OF THE *PRINCE WILHELM* WAS WREATHED IN GUN FLASHES AS SHE POURED SHELL AFTER SHELL INTO THE DEFENCELESS CRUISER.

HERE'S
OUR LATEST
POSITION! GET IT
OUT AS FAST AS YOU
CAN—AND KEEP
SENDING IT! STAY AT
THAT RADIO SET
WHATEVER HAPPENS!



JENNINGS PUSHED PETER THROUGH THE DOOR THAT LED DOWN TO THE W/T OFFICE — AND PANIC BUBBLED UP INSIDE PETER. THIS WAS THE GRAPNEL ALL OVER AGAIN! DOWN THERE, IN THE DEPTHS OF THE SINKING SHIP WAS A BLACK TRAP OF DEATH...



A VIOLENT SHUDDER SHOOK THE CLIVEDEN FROM STEM TO STERN — AND SENT PETER SPRAWLING TO THE FOOT OF THE IRON LADDER....



The Crimson Sea

ABOARD THE *PRINZ WILHELM*, THE GERMAN CAPTAIN STARED BLEAKLY AT THE HELPLESS *CLIVEDEN*: THERE WAS NO MERCY IN HIS VOICE AS HE RAPPED OUT THE ORDER THAT WOULD SEND THE BRITISH CRUISER TO THE BOTTOM.

BRING ALL GUNS TO BEAR!
FINISH HER OFF!



BY THAT TIME, PETER WAYMAN HAD CLAWED AND CRAWLED ALONG THE LISTING DECKS OF THE *CLIVEDEN* TO THE W/T OFFICE. HIS TREMBLING HAND SOUGHT THE MORSE KEY...

THE MORSE KEY'S SMASHED!
I'LL HAVE TO GO ON TO R/T!



THIS IS THE *CLIVEDEN*! POSITION
TWENTY DEGREES NORTH
SEVENTEEN MINUTES,
TWELVE SECONDS EAST!
I REPEAT, POSITION....



NOW CAME THE KILL! SALVO AFTER SALVO
RIPPED INTO THE CRUISER, CUTTING THE
GALLANT SHIP TO PIECES.



IST KAPUT!
THE BRITISH ARE
ABANDONING
SHIP!

SHE'S STILL
SENDING OUT
RADIO SIGNALS,
HERR KAPITAN!

THE GUNS OF THE PRINZ WILHELM FELL SILENT AND HER CREW LINED THE RAILS TO
WATCH AS THE CLIVEDEN'S STERN DIPPED AND THE COLD NORTH SEA SWEEPED IN
THROUGH HER SHATTERED
PLATES AND BULKHEADS....



THE OPERATOR'S
STILL SENDING OUT
HER POSITION,
HERR KAPITAN.

IT IS
INCREDIBLE.
I SALUTE THE
SHIP, AND THE MAN
STILL ABOARD
HER!

IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE CLIVEDEN'S WIRELESS BATTERIES BECAME WATER-LOGGED AND SILENCED THE TRANSMITTER, THAT PETER WAYMAN ABANDONED HIS POST...



THE SACRIFICE OF THE CLIVEDEN WAS NOT IN VAIN. AS SHE SLID SLOWLY TO HER FINAL RESTING PLACE, HEAVY UNITS OF THE HOME FLEET APPEARED ON THE HORIZON....



THE SMOKE SMUDGES OF THE HOME FLEET WERE IMMEDIATELY SIGHTED BY THE GERMAN LOOK-OUTS—BUT BY THEN, IT WAS TOO LATE! THE ROYAL NAVY HAD CAUGHT THE POCKET-BATTLESHIP IN THE OPEN!

THERE ARE TWO HEAVY CRUISERS, A LIGHT CRUISER AND FOUR DESTROYERS, HERR KAPITAN! SHALL WE RUN FOR THE FIORD?

ALTER COURSE TO FACE THEM, YOU FOOL! IT'S TOO LATE TO RUN NOW!

RELENTLESSLY THE HOME FLEET CLOSED IN. THIS WAS A KILLING FORCE—A FORCE WHOSE SOLE TASK WAS TO SINK THE POCKET-BATTLESHIP, THE PRIDE OF THE GERMAN NAVY—AND TO AVENGE THE CLIVEDEN...



THERE WAS NO ESCAPE FOR THE *PRINZ WILHELM*, NO BOLT HOLE FOR HER TO RUN TO THIS TIME! UNDER THE PRECISION FIRE OF HER ATTACKERS, SHE WAS BATTERED INTO HELPLESSNESS....



LIKE ANTS THE GERMAN CREW SWARMED ON TO HER ARMOUR'D DECK, NOW ALMOST AWASH ON THE PORT SIDE, AND LEAPED INTO THE WATER, STAINED CRIMSON AND ORANGE BY THE GLARE OF THE FLAMES....



OF THE MANY HEADS THAT BOBBED IN THE OIL SLICK OF THE SINKING *PRINZ WILHELM*, NOT ALL WERE GERMAN. . . MORE THAN A HUNDRED SURVIVORS FROM THE *CLIVEDEN* CLUNG TO THE HEAVING TANGLE OF WRECKAGE THAT LITTERED THE SEA.



TWENTY-FOUR HOURS LATER, IN THE QUIET OF A SMALL NAVAL HOSPITAL SET IN THE GREEN FIELDS OF ENGLAND, LIEUTENANT WAYMAN, ONE OF THE LUCKY SURVIVORS OF THAT EPIC BATTLE, RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS. . .





WHEN THE DOCTOR VISITED DAVE, HE TOLD HIM,
GENTLY, THAT PETER WAS MISSING.....



MORE THAN THREE WEEKS PASSED BEFORE DAVE WAS FIT ENOUGH TO LEAVE THE HOSPITAL AND GO TO HIS HOME ON INDEFINITE LEAVE.



THAT EVENING, DAVE AND HIS FATHER SAT TALKING OVER THE EVENTS OF THE PAST MONTHS.

PETER TOLD ME ABOUT THE GRAPNEL SINKING, DAVE - HE TOLD ME EVERYTHING! IT PREYED ON HIS MIND! HE - HE THOUGHT HE WAS A COWARD. I KNOW HE DID, DAD! HE WAS AFRAID OF BEING SHUT IN WITH THE SHIP GOING DOWN. BUT PETER CONQUERED HIS FEAR - AND THAT TAKES GREAT COURAGE.



WHEN DAVE WAS EVENTUALLY FIT AGAIN, HE REPORTED FOR DUTY AND WAS DRAFTED TO A DESTROYER. ONE DAY, HE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM HOME...

THE WORDS DANCED BEFORE DAVE'S EYES...

ANYTHING WRONG, OLD CHAP? NOT BAD NEWS, I HOPE?



the Telegram came this morning - Peter was picked up by a German coastal vessel two days after the Grapnel sank. He is in a P.O.W. Camp in Germany. Thank God and safe your mother

THE MEMORY OF THAT LAST TERRIBLE ONE-SIDED BATTLE WAS FOR EVER BURNED IN DAVE WAYMAN'S MIND FOR IT WAS THE DAY HIS YOUNG BROTHER HAD PROVED HIMSELF WORTHY OF BRITAIN'S FINEST NAVAL TRADITION.

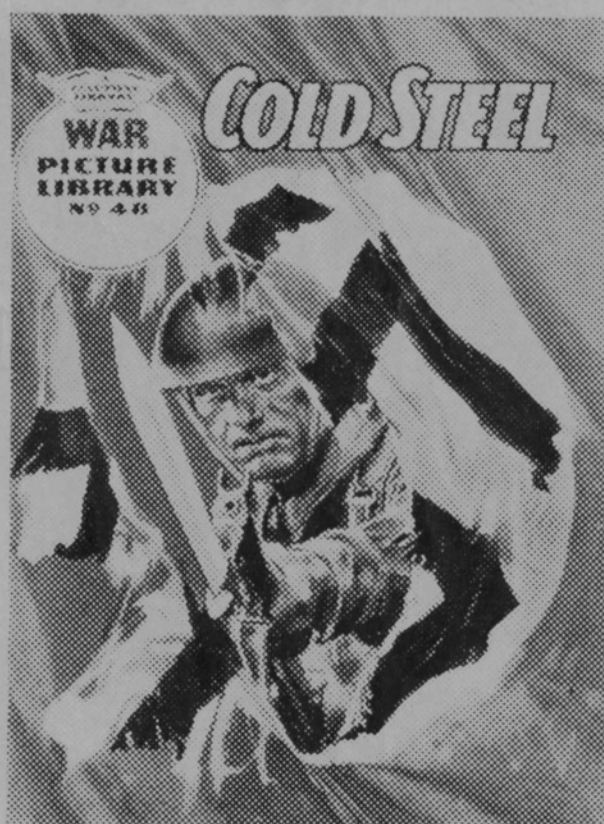
GOOD LUCK,
PETER! YOU NEED
NEVER BE ASHAMED
AGAIN—YOU'VE TAKEN
YOUR PLACE WITH THE
BEST OF 'EM.



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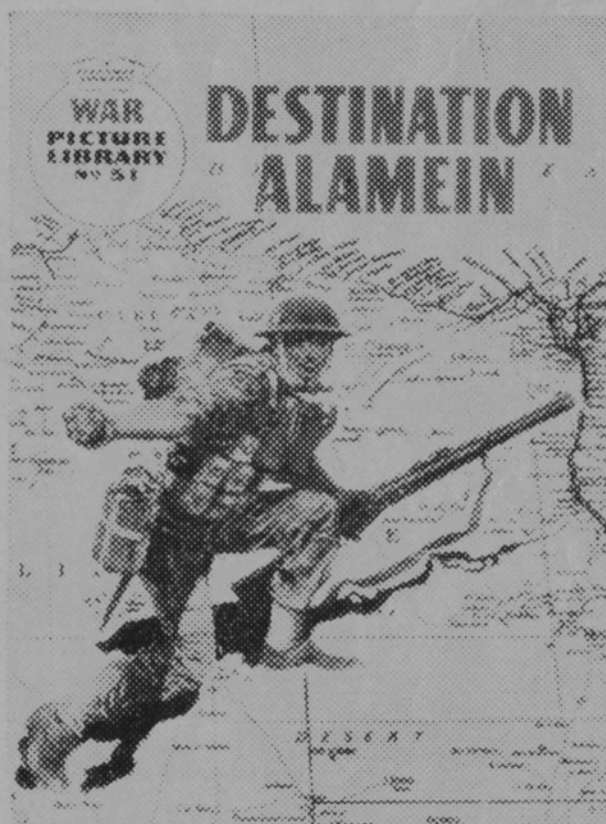
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